BEFORE THE THRONE

BY

GEORGE DARSIE

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Before the Throne

"Lord, Teach Us How to Pray"

By

GEORGE DARSIE

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To Clara

My faithful wife, whose unceasing prayers, sustaining helpfulness, sympathizing support, constant love and affection, and abiding faith and spirituality have been a never-failing source of inspiration and strength, this prayer volume is lovingly dedicated.

PREFACE

David supplies the logic of prayer. He is the author of its fine syllogism. His major premise is:

"If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear."

His minor premise is:

"But verily God hath heard;
He hath attended to the voice of my prayer."

His conclusion is:

"Blessed be God,
Who hath not turned away my prayer,
Nor his lovingkindness from me."

Every one, eminent in piety, accepts this conclusion. He believes in the personal audience the heavenly Father gives to every supplicating cry uttered by his lips. He holds that every prayer of faith

rings the door-bell of heaven, and secures a certain response. God can hear, and he does hear. God can help, and he does help. God can answer, and he does answer. God has not withdrawn from this world and left it to run itself. He is not far from any one of us. Every ray of sunshine is the smile of his love. Every breath of the wind is the whisper of his voice. The blue sky that bends over us is but the visible image of his loving bosom holding myriad worlds in the infinite depths of its tenderness. When we kneel, he sees us. When we pray, he hears us. He has a special, separate, discriminating, personal, constant interest in every child.

To pray is a privilege to be prized, appreciated and improved. To pray acceptably and persuasively is a cultivation the rarest and choicest in the possession of the human heart. To develop prayerfulness is an aim worthy the ambition of the greatest as well as the humblest Christian. It will contribute to his spiritual life and growth as nothing

else in which he engages can possibly do. It will supply an essential part of his Christian armor for his warfare with sin and Satan. It will keep him in living contact and perpetual conversation with the Friend "that sticketh closer than a brother."

"I tell Him all my sorrows,
I tell Him all my joys;
I tell Him all that pleases me,
I tell Him what annoys.
He tells me what I ought to do,
He tells me what to try,
And so we talk together,
My Lord and I."

GEORGE DARSIE.

Terre Haute, Indiana.

RECOGNITION

When a student in Bethany College, I read three articles which greatly profited me. They were from the pen of one whose influence on my life has been greater than that of any one man. They were entitled "What Prayer is For," "Prayers of Ignorance" and "Rejected Answers." The chapters on "The Benefits of Praying for Others," "Not Knowing What He Said" and "The Knocking Peter" were suggested by them. The illuminating essays and uplifting sermons of Wm. M. Taylor and Henry Ward Beecher have been most suggestive in the preparation of the contents of this book. E. J. Meacham, at whose invitation the following chapters were first prepared for the pages of *The Lookout,* has proven a wise and discerning counselor. "Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due—honor to whom honor."

GEORGE DARSIE.

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BEFORE THE THRONE

I.

BEFORE THE THRONE

I.

Before the Throne.

"Prayer is the key to the morning, and the bolt of the evening."

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gate of death,
He enters heaven with prayer."

It is the soul's sincere expression to God. It touches every faculty, passion, feeling and emotion of the being in its wide sweep. It brings us before the throne in sweet and intimate fellowship and communion. And there we should be often—

In "supplications." The love of the world is strong within us. Its ambitions beckon, its pleasures appeal, its aims and fashions and practices allure. The murmuring streams, mossy banks, refreshing shades and fragrant flowers, which adorn its broad way at its entrance, furnish a glamour that wins and grips. Oh, how

we need to be before the throne in "supplications" most frequent, that the evil of the world may be averted, that we may not become its slavish devotees, or go with the crowd to moral destruction.

We should be before the throne in *"prayers"* for every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. We are by nature blind and ignorant. We know not God or ourselves. We are in darkness as to our origin, duty and destiny. We want, oh, how we want, the light! How faint and feeble the light of reason, science, philosophy. But how sure and safe the light which streams from the sunlit hills of God's word on all the great and thrilling questions of life, death and immortality. And with the Bible open before us we come before the throne and pray:

"Open thou my eyes, that I may behold
Wondrous things out of thy law."

Oh! the hours of weakness which we all have. How little able we are to meet life's fierce temptations, life's awful battles, life's unrelenting foes. How un-

equal seems the struggle. How certain our disastrous defeat. But hold, ye fearful and unbelieving, "they that be for us are greater than those who are against us." To the throne, to the throne, you must go! Trust not the struggle to your own feeble strength, rest not in the failing arm of flesh, but in the everlasting arm of Him who will always be your refuge and your strength. Let your prayer forever be:

"I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me."

When the rude blasts of sorrow blow, when deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, when all his waves and billows have gone over you, there is only one unfailing source of help, and that is to God's throne for comfort. The hand that smites can heal. He who sends the sorrow provides the balm. Oh, tired, heart-broken sufferer, God is only trying to make you lift up your heart to him.

"Joy of the desolate, light of the straying;
Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure;
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can not cure."

Learn to pray: O gracious God, lead me into the deep, dark waters, but give me thyself. Rob me of all I prize, but so it give me more of thee. Take me even through the valley of the thickest, blackest shadows, but if it bring me before thy throne, and give me thy rod and thy staff to comfort, all shall be well.

It is not great single burdens which crush people so much as a combination of little burdens, cares and anxieties. Afflictions, misfortunes, calamities come usually one at a time and at long intervals, but the countless cares of life that cease not to wear and grind—that *never* let up—that harass and worry day in and day out, year in and year out, they are the things that more than all else crush us to earth and leave us prostrate. It is not the weight of calamity,

but the "*weight* of care, that crushes into dumb despair." How many with Longfellow feel to say and to sing:

"My heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear."

If you could but lift care from the shoulders and hearts of men and women, what a relief and benefaction it would be to mankind. But *you* can not; only God can. Therefore, go before his throne for rest and peace. To a longing how deep and universal does Jesus appeal when he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—rest from the burdens of worry and care. What a responsive and harmonious chord does the apostle Peter strike within us when he urges, "Cast all thy anxiety on God, for he is anxious for you." He does not ask you to share your anxieties with him, but to give them to him. He is strong to bear them. They are heavy for you, but, oh, how light for him!

"I bring, I bring them all to Thee,
The burden is too great for me."

Before the throne we should come in *"intercessions."* The very word is suggestive of *"others."* He would have us remember before his throne "others." He would have us swallow up our self-love in a broadening love for them. Intercede in their behalf.

Let us come before the throne of God in *"thanksgivings."* It is easy to make gifts, but it is hard to receive them graciously. "I thank you" should be ceaselessly in our hearts and upon our lips when we come before the throne. What have we not for which to thank God? The contemplation of all our mercies overwhelms our thoughts. Peace reigns. The arts of peace flourish. Our schools, colleges, seminaries, universities, churches grow and prosper. Telegraph, telephone, railroad systems multiply and expand. The field, forest, vineyard, orchard, the mine, the meadow, the garden are abundant in products. Great harvests fill our large storehouses. Man-

ufacturing, commercial, mercantile and mechanical interests abound in activity. Wealth increases. Contagion is stayed. The health of the people is remarkable. The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto the salvation of individuals and nations in every soil and clime of the whole round world. Christ is able everywhere to seek and to save the sinful and lost. The spirit of sincere and devout thanksgiving should possess us. God is wondrously good to us. Let us remember the source of all blessings. Let every mercy bring us to his feet. Let every gift of his grace and of his providence impress us with his abundant supply of every needed thing. Let us see God everywhere, always and in everything. Let us come before his throne and say:

"Bless Jehovah, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;

Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness
and tender mercies."

Let us pray in the words of Joseph Addison:

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view,
I'm lost in wonder, love and praise.

"Unnumbered comforts on my soul
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From whom those comforts flowed.

"When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe
And led me up to man.

"Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.

"Through all eternity, to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise;
But oh! eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise!"

II.

THE EFFECT OF PRAYER ON GOD

II.

The Effect of Prayer on God.

The common belief that the only value of prayer is to be found in the reflex benefit to the soul in the act of praying is as absurd and ridiculous as to say that the sole benefit of eating is to strengthen the muscles of the jaw, or that the sole benefit of breathing is to strengthen the muscles of the chest. As well might a physician advise his patient to take a long walk every morning to a certain spring to drink of its water, knowing all the while that the spring was dry, but expecting the benefit to come from the walk. No physician would thus trifle with a patient. Nor would God command his people to pray, and then say, "It makes no difference, as to results, whether you pray or not."

The first condition to all prayer is faith, and it is impossible without it. "He that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Now, the man who says that God doesn't hear, and yet who approaches and prays God to give him what he doesn't believe he will give him, flings insult into God's face and is the best illustration I know of what men call a "pious fraud." It makes prayer a farce, a mockery, a hypocrisy.

The reflex influence of prayer on the soul is impossible unless we are assured that God hears and answers it. There can be no earnestness and fervency, no soul or spirit in it on the part of him who prays without firm belief in its efficacy. Take away that faith, and prayer is a pure formality, an unmeaning pronouncing of idle words. It is the *"effectual fervent* prayer of the righteous man that availeth much." And no man can pray thus unless he believes that his prayer will have weight with God. The reflex influence and benefit of prayer is the result of belief in its efficacy.

To doubt the efficacy of prayer is to

doubt God and his word. Downright infidelity has no more virulent form than this. It gives the lie to hundreds of passages. It makes God a willful deceiver and falsifier. It makes the history of his people from the beginning till now a myth. It changes the whole character of the Bible. Jesus says, "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." It was Hezekiah's piteous pleadings which secured to him fifteen years' lease of life after God had warned him "to put his house in order." When Elijah wanted to blight the land of Israel because of its own and its king's idolatry, to restore the widow of Zarephath's son, to bring down fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice on Carmel, to end the three and a half years of drought with rain, he had recourse to God in prayer, and not

once did the answer fail. Abraham, Jacob, Hannah, David, Solomon, Elisha, Daniel and Cornelius talked to God in prayer as a dutiful child talks to a considerate father, and always found "the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth."

It is the experience of Christian people in all ages that prayer prevails with God. It is the conviction of every pious heart.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

III.

THE EFFECT OF PRAYER ON HIM WHO PRAYS

III.

The Effect of Prayer on Him Who Prays.

Prayer brings our wills into submission to God. It enables us to practice what Joseph Cook styles "similarity of feeling with God." A higher Christian attainment it were impossible to acquire than the sanctification of the will, saying, "Not my will, but *thine,* be done."

Prayer brings divine strength to every life. When in the Garden of Gethsemane the Master had prayed three times, "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." There are two ways to rid us of an awful burden: 1. Take it away. 2. Give us strength to bear it. The prayer of Jesus was for help to drink the cup that would set free a guilt-laden humanity and save the world. And that is what he received. And that was the answer to Paul's thrice-repeated petition for the removal of his

thorn in the flesh: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness." And Paul adds: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me."

"Are *we* weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, *still our refuge,*
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

As a spiritual exercise, prayer is strengthening. We do not get the soul in different ways, under different laws, from those in which we get the body and mind. If a man does not exercise his arm, he develops no biceps muscle; and if he does not exercise his soul, he acquires no muscle in his soul, no strength of character, no vigor of moral fiber, no beauty of spiritual growth. Prayer exercises the soul, as the gymnasium does the body. It develops a rich, strong,

vigorous, well-rounded Christian character.

It is a source of comfort to tell our troubles to God. That of itself will lift the load from us. When we have told a loving friend about any trial or sorrow, how that lightens it. When another feels our woe and we know it, how much that helps us to bear it. When John's disciples had sorrowfully buried their beloved leader, *"they went and told Jesus."* To whom else could they so well go? It brought them the needed comfort. When Hezekiah received Sennacherib's threatening letter, "He went up into the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah." What a human thing to do! It brought him the reassurance he craved. When Elijah's fit of despondency was upon him, he poured out his soul to God in a frightfully jaundiced outlook for his people and the country in general. God came to his rescue in a complete recovery of his natural elasticity by abundant food and rest, and sent him back to finish the work he had given him to do.

And when we come before our Father to tell him our cares, how in so doing they roll from our weary hearts into his great heart, and there comes forth from him the sustaining power of an almighty grace that soothes and rests and cheers and strengthens in our bitter need.

Prayer has a transforming influence upon the life and character. Of Christ it is written: "As he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling." One night of prayer changed the whole character and career of Jacob. He wrestled with the celestial messenger from the skies till the break of day, when his importunate wrestling prevails and all he asks is given. He is entirely a new man, and, to express this fact, his name is changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince of God. We, too, come forth from seasons of prayer changed, elevated, ennobled, transfigured in life and character.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, speaking of the inspiriting influence of certain com-

panies of great men into which he was thrown, said that the atmosphere of intellect and sentiment with which they surrounded him was so much more stimulating than wine that if he took liquors for any purpose it would be to *keep him sober!* In just such a way prayer brings us into a celestial company whose spiritual atmosphere exhilarates like mountain air and stimulates like a sea breeze. It keeps us in tune with the Infinite. It makes real to us the divine promises, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you;" "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It secures the Holy Spirit as an abiding guest in every pious heart to perform his threefold ministry—to comfort, to strengthen and to sanctify.

IV.

WHAT PRAYER MUST BE TO BE EFFECTIVE

IV.

What Prayer Must Be to Be Effective.

1. *Secret.* We can pray—blessed thought—anywhere. But the best place for availing prayer is the closet. Here all is secret. And the great powers are secret powers. "The foliage of the vineyard is woven in secret looms, and the juices of the grape are distilled in subterranean laboratories." The power that swings the earth on its axis and holds the planets in their places is a secret power. Jesus loved secret prayer. And when teaching his disciples how to pray, he said: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee."

2. *Humble.* Those who stand firmest in the presence of sin bow lowest in the presence of God. Moses, who never

cringed in the presence of Pharaoh, took off his shoes at the burning bush. Elijah, who on Mount Carmel resembled the oak, the king of the forest, when he came to pray for rain, "cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." Paul, when discussing with men, claimed that his call and gifts were second to none of the apostles, but, when looking into the face of God, confessed himself "the chief of sinners." That is ever the spirit of effective prayer. It is the way of the publican and not of the Pharisee.

3. *Definite.* Many prayers are indefinite, abounding in circumlocution and in pointless generalities. They are like the Spanish sailors in Santiago Bay who shot at random, or the mimic battle where powder alone is used. Having no definite object in mind, when the regular time comes for prayer, the lips do their best by repeating stereotyped phrases inherited from others. We should know what we want, and ask for it. When we enter a store, we do not ask for every-

thing on the shelves, but only for the things we want, and the salesman hands them to us. There is too much pointless praying which starts after nothing and ends nowhere. The poor publican was definite, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Blind Bartimæus was definite, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." The dying thief was definite, "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

4. *Active.* There is a logical connection between our prayers and our activity in the direction of our petitions. A little boy heard his father ask the Lord to feed a destitute family near by, and the child said, "Papa, if you will give me the keys, I will answer your prayer by taking those hungry people something to eat." We should not ask God to do what *we* should do. If we expect a letter to reach its destination, we stamp it; otherwise we know it will go to the Dead-letter Office. Uncle Sam will do his part, but we must do ours also. There is a dead-prayer office, too, and thousands of well-worded and eloquent petitions are buried

there. Wives pray for the conversion of husbands, and teachers for scholars, but what are *they* doing for their conversion? It is right for a penitent sinner to plead, like the publican, for mercy, or, like Paul, for light, and that his friends should do likewise. But these prayers avail nothing when accompanied by inconsistent disobedience. We pray for daily bread, but not for bread in violation of God's law. We plow, sow, reap, garner, grind and bake, and so meet God where he promises to meet us. The man who prays for daily bread, and folds his arms and does nothing, may *think* he is *trusting* God; but really he is *tempting* God to let him starve. So also the sinner who prays to God to forgive his sins and refuses to obey the voice of God—that is, refuses to obey the gospel of Christ—may *think* he is *trusting,* when he is only *tempting* God. Paul prayed for mercy and light, but when he learned the way of salvation he walked in that way. It is a law of nature and grace alike that God does

for man what man can not do for himself; and what man can do, God has determined he shall do, or perish.

5. *Prayer must be offered in harmony with God's will.* "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is one petition of the Lord's Prayer. "Not my will, O Lord, but thine, be done," was the Master's Gethsemane prayer. "Go show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth," was the word of God to Elijah when he left Sarepta. He showed himself to Ahab, but the earth was still hot and bare, and so he prayed to God in harmony with his will to send rain. Some might think, where the will of God is so definitely expressed, prayer is not necessary. But the knowledge of God's will is intended to incite to prayer, not to restrain it. It is the mold into which we are to pour our hearts, showing us that for which to ask.

6. *Of course prayer must be offered in faith.* "Let him ask in faith, nothing doubting." He must believe in God, and that he hears and answers prayer.

"To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

7. *A condition of acceptable prayer is right living.* David says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." To cherish, love or adhere to evil is to close the ears of God. The prayer of the wicked is an abomination. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but *the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*" Not only must our lives and acts be all right, but our hearts also. We must hate and forsake our sins. Pray:

"Clear thou me from hidden faults.
Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;
Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be clear from great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer."

V.
IMPORTUNATE PRAYER

V.

Importunate Prayer.

Read Luke 18: 1-8. Jesus wished to comfort and encourage his disciples, in view of the direful and approaching events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. "And he spake a parable unto them, to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." Instead of yielding to the fears and apprehensions of the hour, their recourse is in prayer to God, and not in single petitions, but in *repeated* petitions, in importunate prayer, that will not take "No" for an answer. To impress this point, Jesus speaks the parable of the unjust judge.

"There was in a city a judge." This judge's character is very unpromising to those who come seeking justice. He "feared not God, and regarded not man." He had no sense of responsibility, no recognition of obligation to God or man.

Hence, he is utterly lacking in the essentials of a just judge. The protection he would give the innocent would be the protection of wolves to lambs, of hawks to chickens. To seek his court to obtain redress seems a hopeless case. And yet in this parable this judge stands for whom, do you think? For God! No doubt there were many just judges in the land, yet Jesus passes them all by and fastens on this unjust and wicked judge as a representative of God! Why is this? He has a very good reason. It is because this judge's character is the very opposite of God. He chooses him for purposes of *contrast,* and not of resemblance.

"*And there was a widow in that city;* and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversaries." She asks the law's protection. Her case is recognized tacitly as a good one. The judge's duty was plain, but he refused to do it. It was a widow who asked it. "The very name stirs the fountain of our sympathy by telling us of sorrow,

loneliness and bereavement. Like a vine torn by the scaling lightning from the tree around which it hung, and left to trail in the dust, yet leaving still some tendrils clasping the rifted trunk, so is woman when death writes 'widow' on her broken heart." Though God's law plainly said, "Ye shall not afflict any *widow* or fatherless;" though it said, "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless and the widow"—yet this judge cared not for any of these things. Only two things, seemingly, could influence such a man —power and money. This widow had neither. She came to him in weakness and poverty. Her case seems utterly hopeless. Purposely does Jesus picture it so. And as the judge represents God, so the poor widow represents the child of God praying. And as the one represents God by contrast, so does the other. Prayer is not a hopeless calling on God, but the very opposite.

When she said, "Avenge me of my adversary," the record says, "He would

not for awhile." But his repeated refusals did not daunt or divert her. She kept on just the same. If one asking did not suffice, she asked again and again, until her petitions prevailed. Her mind was made up. She would have her rights. "When a woman will, she will, and when she won't ,she won't." This judge found that he had come across just such a case. And he surrendered. Not to equity, or justice, or law, but to *importunity*. "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming." She had neither power nor money, but *persistency*. "And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is long-suffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" If the unjust judge heard, shall not God, his exact contrast, hear? If the widow's hope-

less petitions prevailed, how much more the petitions of the "elect, that cry to him day and night." Yet God likes to see our earnestness shown by importunity. And as the widow importuned the unjust judge, so should we importune our heavenly Father.

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Times of stress and trouble come now as well as then. Clouds lower and storms rise and we see no way out. The remedy is prayer—*importunate prayer*. "Be instant in prayer." "Pray without ceasing." "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" That is, shall he find faith in prayer and its power—in *importunate prayer* and *its power?* God's word teaches its importance all through. It brought healing to the Syrophœnician woman's daughter. "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set

before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee? I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as much as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Jacob wrestled *all night* in prayer. Elijah prayed *seven* times for rain. Jesus prayed *three* times in the garden.

Why does God ask importunity? Is it because he is unwilling to answer? Does he have to be made willing? Ah, no! It is for our good. It is to test our faith, earnestness, determination, and so strengthen them. Although God does not seem to hear prayer, he will hear and answer and bless in his own good time, and we will find that no prayer offered in faith is ever lost. And though he sometimes refuses us what we ask, it is always to give us something better.

VI.

PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER

VI.

Pray One for Another.

It is the natural impulse of every religious heart to pray. The prayerless Christian is a contradiction of terms. But there is a higher kind of prayer than prayer for self. Prayer may become, and often is, very narrow, exclusive and selfish. We may be so bound up in contemplation of our own affairs that our petitions may not embrace needs beyond the limitations of our home. But that, of course, is a perversion of this blessed spiritual exercise. To guard against this tendency, God's word urges us continually to "pray one for another." No less does our consciousness of human necessities urge us to do likewise. Naturally, one who is religious enough to pray at all will be likely to let the range of his supplication widen to other interests than his own.

And we are not left in doubt for whom

we should pray. "I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place." These various terms cover broadly all phases and forms of prayer, and are a rich designation of expressions to use in praying. But notice that the *application* is to all men. How broad the philanthropies of the gospel, and how wise the out-reachings of Christian benevolences.

We are to pray for kings and all who are in authority. We do not pray enough for our rulers. We should bear them up before God. When Lincoln left Springfield, Ill., to become President of the United States, he asked his lifelong associates to pray for him. This is the attitude of every public man who has any realization of the duties and responsibilities of his office. Pray for the mayor in his office, the judge on the bench, the Governor in his chair, the President in the White House, the lawmakers in Congress, the policeman on

his round—all who serve in any public capacity. They will be blessed and helped thereby.

Pray for the unfortunate and afflicted. The world is full of people in distress, poverty, sickness, trouble. How easy it is to forget them in our happiness and prosperity. If we can not relieve distress, we can at least feel and pray for those who are in the "deeps." We shall be there ourselves, sooner or later. We are born to such things, as the sparks fly upward. They are certain to come some time, and then we shall appreciate, if not before, the strength of a heartfelt prayer to God for those who are in sorrow.

We should pray for our enemies. We have the highest authority for saying, "Love one another, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the just and the unjust." Hard? Yes. But it is not impossible. Have any slandered you, stung you with false accusations? Pray

for them, as Stephen prayed for his murderers, and as Jesus, on the cross, said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Pray for God's people. We should pray for our own church that it may intensify in spirituality, grow in missionary zeal, acquire more aggressiveness and do a work that will "tell on ages and tell for God." Pray for your preacher, the spiritual leaders of your congregation, your Bible-school officers and teachers, Endeavor workers, and all who have been called to serve the congregation. But, do not stop there. Paul closes his Ephesian letter by saying, "Grace be with *all them* that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness." God has a people in all the churches and religious bodies of the world. Pray for them. Pray for their unity, faithfulness, loyalty, spiritual uplift and unfolding.

And then we should pray for the unsaved, that the truth may reach and illuminate their minds, change their hearts and lives, lead them to live soberly, godly,

righteously every day. God will hear and answer such a prayer.

We need more prayers for missions and missionaries. And that not only in the pulpit on Sunday, but also in all the services of the Lord's house, and at home every time we lift our hearts to God. What we pray for, we will work for and give to, and the more earnestly we pray the more cheerfully and generously will we give. Jesus just as truly taught us to pray "Thy kingdom come," as he taught us to go preach his gospel. Did you ever offer one sincere petition for the evangelization of the world? Did you ever a single time bear up before God the heroic and devoted men and women who are out yonder in heathen lands trying to dispel the gross darkness which covers the people?

VII.

THE BENEFITS OF PRAYING FOR OTHERS

VII.

The Benefits of Praying for Others.

It broadens our sympathies. It makes us think about and care for others. It breaks up our littleness and exclusiveness. It causes our affections to flow into wider channels of benevolence. A man who does not pray for missions does not give to missions. And one who does, can not help it. Praying for others makes us remember that we live in, and are a part of, a great world of trial, suffering, want and woe, with which we can at least sympathize, and for which we can pray, if we can do nothing else. We live too much to ourselves, too far removed from the lives of others. We are too often like fellow-prisoners shut up in cells with thick walls between us and with all communication cut off. How forcibly Jesus, in the parable of the good Samaritan, teaches us that every man in distress is our neighbor. "Look not every

man upon his own things only, but every man also upon the things of others." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." If we would learn wideness of sympathy, broadness of benevolence, unselfishness of feeling; if we would have a heart that beats responsive to the sighs and sorrows of suffering, sad humanity—we must cultivate the habit of praying for others.

It makes us love men to pray for them. You just can not hate any one for whom you pray. You can not cherish ill will and malice toward him. You just *have* to love him. When you hold him up before God and ask the blessings of Heaven to descend upon him, it is simply impossible to feel unkindly toward him. If there is any person you have found it particularly hard to love, whose name arouses in you bitter antagonism, pray for him, carry his name before God, and ask God's best gifts for him, and, almost before you know it, your repugnance has vanished. The reason is that in prayer for others we learn, as it were, to look at

them with God's eyes. We learn, like God, to regard them with compassion and forbearance. We learn to make allowances for their natural and inborn infirmities, for the unfortunate circumstances of their lives. We get a higher sense of their value. We view them as heirs of immortality, and think of what they shall be when, rid of their imperfections, they are admitted to the shining ranks of the redeemed. Seeing them thus in the light of eternity and in their relations with God and the endless future, how our ugly feelings melt away, and we crave for them every divine blessing. "What we need is such a feeling toward men that every day we shall carry their cases before God and look at their vulgarities in the light of God's pity, and not in the light of our own contempt and cynical criticism." Oh, you sour-hearted Christian, whose feelings toward the mass of your fellow-beings is one perpetual stream of rancor, bitterness and gall, if you would know the sweetness of love, the gladness of a kindly spirit toward

all, get down on your knees and pray fervently for others, breathe their names at the mercy-seat!

Praying for others destroys all disposition to indulge in harsh and uncharitable judgments of them. Nothing is more common than malicious judgments of others. Instead of trying to find an excuse for them, we often try to find an offense against them. Instead of waiting to know the full facts, we leap to conclusions and pronounce hasty condemnation. So few are deliberate and just in their judgments. We try men in the prejudiced court of our own minds and condemn them unheard. We work up an imaginary case, and on it, as a basis, heap maledictions on their heads. We introduce our one-sided test, make our unopposed argument against them, bring down upon their heads accusation and denunciation, and they are not allowed to cross-examine one of our witnesses, introduce one of their own, or speak one word in denial, extenuation or explanation. We shall never be done with this

miserable business until we learn in sincerity to pray for others. How can we be other than charitable in our judgments with those for whom we pray? If God has borne long with you and me, why should we not bear with them? Oh, harsh and cruel tongues and judges, who would rather tear a reputation to tatters than mend it, who would rather think evil than good of a fellow-being, learn to be gentle and kind in your judgments of others by invoking daily blessings on their heads!

VIII.

THE PRAYING CHRIST

VIII.

The Praying Christ.

One of the sweetest pictures in the life of Christ is portrayed by Mark: "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." It is a complete and perfect picture in one brief, graphic sentence. Imagine the fresh morning air, the beautiful hillside sloping down to and overlooking blue Galilee, the absence of the crowd, the quietness and solitude of nature, and the praying Christ, talking with his Father in close, intimate communion! We might easily ask, Why couldn't he stay in Capernaum and pray? Why couldn't he pray in Simon's house where he was stopping? Why couldn't he lift his soul in prayer as he lay upon his couch, at the early hour when all about him were asleep? He could, no doubt, but he preferred the place of solitude,

the silence of nature, the rugged hillside where, alone and unobserved, he could pour out his heart to God. And we might also ask, Why did Jesus need to pray at all? Wasn't he God? Didn't he have all power? Couldn't he command the winds and seas and all the forces of nature? Weren't the resources of the universe at his disposal? Why did he need to ask anybody for anything? Ah! he had a human nature as well as a divine, and it had the same longings and needs that our nature has, and they could not be met and satisfied without daily and constant communion with the Father.

Especially do we find Jesus praying at every crisis of his life. He had recourse to prayer at his baptism, when making the selection of his apostles, just before feeding the five thousand, on the mount of transfiguration, in his last intimate farewell meeting with his apostles, at his betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, and when hanging by his pierced hands and feet between heaven and earth on the cruel cross of Calvary. If there

is a time above all others when we need the help of prayer, it is when facing a crisis.

But, aside from the times of crisis and special stress, Jesus was accustomed to pray. The instance recited by Mark is an illustration. So far as we know, nothing out of the ordinary was transpiring. Jesus was engaged in his regular work. Things were moving smoothly onward. And yet he felt the need and sought the privilege of communion with his Father, even at such a time. It was his daily custom, it was his constant habit. "And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." What could be more suggestive of a habit of prayer than these words? And isn't it remarkable that the request to be taught to pray came from Christ's disciples? They mentioned it first. Ah! there was wisdom in that. Prayer is a thing of natural inclination to pious hearts. Force it on

God's children and you may destroy the natural inclination. Jesus waited, therefore, till the natural inclination asserted itself in the request, and then acceded to it.

But do you notice that it was his example that excited the desire to pray? "As *he* was praying in a certain place" the request was made of him to teach his disciples to pray. And why should not his example excite the same desire in us? We, too, are his disciples. If Jesus needed to pray, why do not we need also to pray? If prayer was his daily custom, why not ours? If prayer helped him, why not us? If he loved this solitary place and the quiet hour alone with God, should not we esteem it an equal privilege and great joy to be often on the hillside with none but God near? If at times of crisis he prayed with special intensity, why should not we? If he couldn't get along without ceaselessly calling on God, how can we? Yea, more, every reason that can be given why Christ should pray, becomes a reason

a thousand-fold greater why *we* should. If he was always and everywhere "the praying Christ," O Christian man or woman, how much more should we be praying Christians!

Prayer gave Christ power, and so does it all Christians. Luther was a man of power, because he could not get through any day without going to God at least three times in earnest, agonizing prayer. Mary Queen of Scots feared one of the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men. The prayers of Henry Ward Beecher enriched the lives of thousands of Christians because his own life had been transformed, beautified, hallowed, glorified thereby. And prayer will thus bless our hearts and lives, increase our zeal and earnestness, and give us power to work for God.

IX.

A PRAYING CHURCH

IX.

A Praying Church.

The apostolic church has always, and rightly, been considered a model for all succeeding times to pattern after, and therefore a model for us to-day. But as such it emphasizes some things which we have not always, I fear, sufficiently appreciated. We have been accustomed to look to it for doctrinal rather than practical purposes; that is to say, we have used it as a model for settling the true name by which the church should be called, the organization of the church, its rule of faith and practice, its creed, its foundation, and so on (which is all right and proper). But the apostolic church is a model in some other respects, which more closely touch the springs of practical living and influence us more strongly in our daily lives. Particularly is it a model of a praying church.

It was born in prayer. Returning to

Jerusalem, after the ascension of Christ, the apostles entered an upper room and *"continued stedfastly in prayer"* until the day of Pentecost was come. It was a protracted prayer-meeting, and out of it came the church of Christ. It is characterized by *steadfastness* in prayer. Of the three thousand who became obedient to the faith after Peter's first gospel sermon, it is said, "They continued *stedfastly* in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, *and the prayers.*" It gained strength in persecution by prayer. When Peter and John in Jerusalem had been commanded, with threatenings, to "preach no more in the name of Jesus," they went to their own company and reported all the chief priests and elders had said to them. "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord and said, And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and won-

ders may be done through the name of thy holy servant Jesus. *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*" No less remarkable was Peter's deliverance from the murderous intent of Herod, that night in which he slept between two soldiers to whom he was bound by chains, and "the keepers before the door kept the prison." He could look forward to nothing but certain martyrdom the next day, "but *prayer was made without ceasing by the church unto God for him.*" Suddenly "the angel of the Lord came upon him." A light shone in the prison. He was aroused and bidden "to rise up quickly." And the chains fell from his hands. Hastily making ready, he followed the angel, at his word, so astounded all the while that he "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision." The great prison gates swung wide at their approach. Passing through, they

went the length of the street, "and the angel departed." "And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent forth his angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; *where many were gathered together and were praying.*" His deliverance was a remarkable and almost unbelievable answer to the prayers of the church. Paul never wrote a letter without asking the prayers of the people, "that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in bonds." He urged upon them "with all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit." He is the author of the fine expression, "Pray without ceasing." Peter insists, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto

their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." The apostle James asks: "Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." A part of the entrancing vision of John on the lonely island of Patmos relates to prayer: "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures

and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." What a beautiful figure of speech: *"Having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."* These are all wonderful instances that God hears and answers prayer and urges the importance of it everywhere and always. The apostles continually drew near to God in prayer. The early church was a praying church.

And to-day the praying church is the living church, the spiritual church, the working church. C. H. Spurgeon and F. B. Meyer, in London, and A. J. Gordon, in Boston, built up and sustained churches of power because they made them churches of prayer. In vain does any church attempt anything for the God of glory unless it is begun, carried on and completed in prayer. It should take God into all its plans and purposes. It should carry everything to him in prayer. It should feel its dependence on him, seek

his counsel and aid, submit all things to his guidance. Its members should pray for it in their closets, in their homes, at their places of business, in all the undertakings of human life. The value of such prayer to a church is that it blesses the hearts and lives of the members, increases their zeal and earnestness, gives them power to work for God, promotes fellowship, discourages censorious judgment, cherishes mutual helpfulness, discovers mutual needs, develops power in the congregation, discloses gifts and graces, makes truth personal.

X

A FITTING PRAYER

X.

A Fitting Prayer.

Read 1 Chron. 4:9, 10. These two verses occur in a long and tedious list of genealogies which consumes the first eight chapters of the Books of Chronicles. You read along, pronouncing name after name and family after family, and never dream that there is anything else, when you come upon this passage like a flower blooming in the desert, or a treasure hidden in the sand, or a star peeping through dark clouds. You can never tell, when reading the sacred Scriptures, where you will strike a gold mine of precious lessons; and certainly we strike one right here.

The mother of Jabez gave him a very sinister name with which to go through the world. Jabez means "sorrow." The reason given for calling him Jabez was that he came into the world under sorrowful circumstances. His parents evi-

dently were very poor. They had a large family. They could with difficulty support and feed the children they already had, and another mouth to feed, in the person of little Jabez, seemed almost a calamity. The untoward little stranger, therefore, was quite unwelcome when he came. And yet he speedily proved himself the best of the lot, showing how unjustly he had been named and making for himself a welcome in which no warmth or heartiness was lacking. "And Jabez was *more honorable* than his brethren." He was a higher and grander type of man than they. They had been welcomed and rejoiced over, and parental hopes beat high as their future careers were contemplated, yet they were a grief and disappointment. He had been unwelcome and sorrowed over and his future contemplated with misgivings, and yet he was a joy and a blessing.

No doubt Jabez' hard lot had much to do in making a man of him and in bringing out those sterling qualities in his character which are so becoming. Idle-

ness, luxury and indulgence have ruined millions. Hardihood and struggle and toil have been the *making* of millions. There is some hope for a boy who has to battle his way and make himself. But for the boy for whom everything is paved and smooth, there is little in store.

Jabez' true nobleness comes out in his prayer. He was a religious man, who took God into his plans. He was a praying man, for sorrow draws men to God. And the prayer he offers is a most fitting one. It touches the exact needs of every soul. It is worthy of perpetual use.

"Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." There are some things which seem to be blessings, but are not. There are some things for which we pray that God shows his mercy in withholding from us. How often we ask for what would be only a curse to us. We pray for wealth, honor, power, worldly success, and things of that kind that might be our moral ruin. It is a great test of what a man is, to know that for which he most ardently prays. A man's prayer

may be very selfish and ignoble, and show him to be far from what he ought to be, but Jabez wanted nothing that was not a *real* blessing. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." And our prayer should ever be the same. O Lord, give me not what I most want, but what I most need, that thy blessing may rest upon me. Oh, I trust that that will be our constant petition.

"And enlarge my border." That is the particular blessing he asks. The reference is to his family's ancestral estates. It had formerly possessed a certain territory that was now very much reduced, whether through misfortune or improvidence we know not. But Jabez is ambitious to get all the ancestral acres back again. That is his prayer, "Enlarge my border." A family always had the right to redeem its own land. When a family has for many generations possessed a homestead, it becomes very dear. This homestead was precious to Jabez. And he wanted it back. He labors and prays to that end.

But it is *spiritual* enlargement we most need and for which we should pray. How few of us have our own spiritual dominion under cultivation. We have one thousand acres and about one-tenth improved! We need the growth of knowledge and virtue and righteousness, the increase of faith and hope and love—until we attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We need the enlargement of the border of character and manhood. We need to heed the apostolic admonition, "Be ye also enlarged."

"And that thine hand might be with me." To win back his ancestral inheritance, he proposed to make the fight himself. He is willing to do the struggling himself. But he does want God's presence and aid. That is the right conception. So, in struggling for the overthrow of our sins and vices and evil habits and seeking the enlargement of character, we are to work as if all depended upon ourselves and pray as if all depended on God. We especially need

the aid of our heavenly Father. We are doomed to perpetual failure without him. We must become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must use the invincible weapons which he has provided, and the victory will be sure to come. Oh "that thine hand might be with us."

"Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve or dishearten me or be to my sorrow." He would not ask to be absolutely kept from evil, but only that which might "grieve or dishearten" him, or be to his sorrow. Sickness, disease, suffering, disappointment, trial, trouble, come to all. No one can escape evil of this kind. It is a part of the necessary discipline of life. It is calculated to do us good. It chastens, purifies, elevates us. It teaches us patience, resignation, fortitude, courage, strength. And our prayers should not be for them not to come upon us, but when they do come that they may not dishonor or overwhelm us; that, on the contrary, they may drive us closer to

God, that we may learn to lean on him, that they may be of him sanctified to our good—to our spiritual enlargement; that we may be made grander and purer and stronger men and women by them.

That was Jabez' prayer, and it should be ours. It is a noble prayer. No wonder it is written, "And God granted him that which he requested." And so will God grant our prayer.

XI.

"NOT KNOWING WHAT HE SAID"

XI.

"Not Knowing What He Said."

Peter, upon the mount of transfiguration, asked to build three tabernacles, *"not knowing what he said."* James and John once went to Jesus and asked the privilege of sitting, one on the right hand and the other on the left, in his kingdom. Jesus could grant no such request, and so said, "Ye know not what ye ask." Ambition, not need, dictated the petition. It was out of harmony with Christ's mission and purpose. King Midas of old requested that everything he touched might turn to gold, and was horrified to find that the unreckoned results of his foolish prayer doomed him to starvation and death.

Many are the prayers made at random. They are prompted by fancy or impulse, instead of a deep and well-considered want. They are little more than the mouthings of blindness and ignorance.

They may be prayers of faith and trust, of fervor and earnestness, of eloquence and elegance, but they are not according to God's will, and in mercy he passes them by. It may be said of them as of Peter's prayer, "not knowing what he said."

We pray ignorantly and in unbelief when we ask for "a baptism of fire." The Bible does not teach that as a desirable thing. The baptism of fire, as I read the Bible, means hell fire. Fire is the symbol of divine punishment. It is spoken of as the doom of the lost. In this connection, "the lake which burneth with fire," "everlasting fire," "where the fire is not quenched," are familiar expressions that will occur to all. And in the very place where the "baptism of fire" is spoken of, the explanation of its meaning follows in language that clearly confirms this conclusion. One, therefore, could not well ask for such a visitation from God and be very much blessed if his prayer were answered!

We offer a prayer impossible of an-

swering when we ask God to baptize sinners with the Holy Spirit. The Christian, of course, enjoys the permanent blessing of the indwelling Spirit. He is a sanctifying, strengthening, comforting influence in his life. The Christian has a right to pray for his abiding presence. But the sinner, unconverted and unregenerated, does not. Of him it is written, "Whom the world *cannot* receive." The Holy Spirit operates on sinners through the Word of truth. Not until the sinner has believed and repented and obeyed God in holy baptism is the promise of the Holy Spirit as a guest enjoyed. To pray God to baptize sinners with the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to blunder like Peter, "not knowing what he said."

And we do not know what we say when we pray God to be reconciled to sinners. God is not man's enemy, but man is God's enemy. God does not hate man, but man hates God. Wherever the Bible speaks of reconciliation, it is man to God and not God to man. God is

willing and anxious to save. Speaking of Christ, the apostle says: "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before him." So, to pray for God to be reconciled to sinners is to pray absurdly.

Equally, men know not what they say when they pray God to forgive the disobedient. It is right and proper for them to pray and for others to pray for them, provided they want to obey God. It is right for them to pray if, like Saul of Tarsus, they pray for light, and, when it is granted, walk in it; or, like Cornelius, pray for guidance, and, when it is given, follow it. But God does not forgive man in disobedience. Prayer must never be made a substitute for obdience. Of what avail are divine commands if the blessings associated with them can be enjoyed without submission thereto? God never has and never will say in an-

swer to any prayer, "Well, never mind about doing what I command." To presume that he will say such a thing is an ignorant presumption. It is to repeat over after him Peter's inconsidered prayer on the mount of transfiguration. Obey the Lord, yield to his holy commands, consecrate yourself to him, and then pardon comes. Let us pray for our unconverted friends, but let that prayer be for them to believe on Christ and obey him. Let all our petitions rest on the assurance "that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

XII.

THE KNOCKING PETER

XII.

The Knocking Peter.

Read Acts 12: 14, 15. The very thing they were praying for, Peter's deliverance from prison, had come to pass, and yet when the maid announced that Peter stood at the door, they would not believe it. It is hard to say which is the greater marvel, the way their prayer was answered, or the way they treated the answer when it came to pass.

Peter knocks at the door at the very moment the company were engaged in praying for his deliverance. Rhoda announces his arrival. They refuse to believe the announcement. "And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was so. And they said, It is his angel." And yet they found that the announcement was true. They would not believe the answer to their own prayer. God hears our prayer now, as well as then. His word assures

us that he does. Scores of instances establish the fact. And yet if some Rhoda should announce the answer, we would say, "Thou art mad." One reason so many Christians doubt the efficacy of prayer is that they do not believe God's answers when they come.

We pray to be useful; for God to show us how we can serve him; to open before us opportunities of work for his cause. He does so, and yet we spurn it when it comes, like Peter knocking at our gate. There is no one who wants to work for God but can easily obtain the chance. There is no one who prays to be made useful but his prayer is answered. The trouble is we don't want to do the kind of work God sends us. We don't want to be useful in the way and place God appoints. Like Naaman, we would be willing to do "some *great* thing" for the Lord, but the little, common, every-day things, that bring neither *eclat* nor prominence, we despise. To teach a Sunday-school class, to gather up neighbors and take them to prayer-meeting, to warn one

in peril from fierce temptation, to speak a word in season to him who is weary, to be more gentle and kind and patient in the midst of our family, to visit the sick, encourage the disheartened, comfort the sorrowing, watch for souls, to be everywhere helpful to and considerate of others—these are the opportunities sent of God to knock at our gate, and yet how often we shut them out. Because the command he gives takes a little effort and requires some pains and involves a few things not entirely agreeable, we refuse to accept the answer to our prayer.

We pray to be made better in life and character. Realizing our shortcomings and imperfections and sorrowing over them, we say: "O Lord, make me a purer man, stronger to do the right, braver to resist the wrong, more kind and gentle and patient, more like Jesus my Saviour, more like the high standard of character given in thy holy word." God proceeds to answer our praver. He always works through means. There is no means he more frequently employs in the perfec-

tion of character, there is no means more necessary to this end, than sorrows and afflictions. Jesus himself was made perfect through suffering. God often has to whip the faults out of us as he did out of Jacob. And yet, like Jacob, we cry out and say, "All these things are against me." O friend, when you pray to be made a better man, and in answer thereto God sends the knocking Peter of affliction to your gate, accept the answer when it comes.

So also we pray for comfort. Sorrow comes upon us. Trial and bereavement enshroud us with darkness. We cry unto the Lord for comfort. He is ready to comfort. He hears and answers. A kind and sympathizing heart comes to bring us solace and cheer. But we lock ourselves up in a dark room and refuse to see any one. He gives us work to do to drive away the clouds and happify the heart, but we refuse to do it. He sends us a thousand messages of comfort in his word, but there it lies on the stand unopened and unused. The services of

the Lord's house are at hand, designed for all the afflicted and grief-stricken, and full of strong consolation, but they, too, are refused and neglected. The first place David went when his child died was unto the house of the Lord to worship. But that is now the last place we think of going when sorrow lays a heavy hand upon us. And so it is that when the knocking Peter of comfort comes to our gate, though we have prayed and longed for his coming, we won't let him in! We make the prayer and then refuse the answer!

We pray for forgiveness. He says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Yet when we have confessed, we refuse to accept the assurance. For fifty years people have carried their sins on their consciences, when it was their most gracious privilege to have known they were forgiven had they only believed. They need to learn to take God at his word. They should be careful not to

slam the door in the face of the knocking Peter.

We pray for God's kingdom to come, and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven; for the hastening of the day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; for the speedy arrival of the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; that the nations of the world may be discipled and won to Christ; that the dark and destitute regions of the earth may be reached and illumined by the blessed gospel. Grand men and women volunteer to leave home and friends and kindred and country to bury themselves for life in heathen darkness for Jesus' sake. Work is begun, schools started, religious services established, a center of light inaugurated that sends its rays out into the blackness on every side. And yet, although it comes as the direct answer to our prayer, how many of us, when the basket is passed to receive the offering for world educa-

tion and evangelization, either never see it, or else dole out our pittance for mere appearance' sake. A prayer for world conquest, or for a larger and grander spread of the gospel in our own land, is a mockery and a crime from those who will not back it up with liberal and self-sacrificing contributions. God's answer comes to us in the form of demands and opportunities for enlarged giving to the support of missions. And our every refusal is a clear repetition of the comedy of the knocking Peter and that little band of praying friends and followers!

We pray for the conversion of souls; for the conversion of our children, our neighbors and their children, our friends and loved ones. Yet we fail to speak an earnest word in season. We would let a protracted meeting pass unused for their conversion. We would see them on the point of coming out for Christ and say not one word of encouragement. We won't let the knocking Peter in. We remain securely inside with the door bolted and the windows all barred!

How can we expect to maintain a living faith in the efficacy of prayer if we persistently refuse to recognize the answer when it comes like Peter, knocking at our door?

XIII.

A THRILLING PRAYER

XIII.

A Thrilling Prayer.

"Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you," is the hard requirement of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. He adds experience to precept when on the cross he prays, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." How he must have loved his enemies to have prayed for them under such circumstances! What self-command over every feeling and impulse and passion of his heart he exhibited! Where can the world look to see such sublime suppression of every spirit of hatred and revenge, such unequaled forbearance in the presence of such unparalleled provocation? The petition of Jesus praying for his murderers is the most thrilling event in all the Bible.

How we all need the lesson of this example! How we fly off the handle at the slightest injury! How even the smallest

offense rankles in our heart! How slow we are to forgive and forget! How hard to bury the hatchet! How often, with the handle sticking out, we are ready to seize it when crossed in the least thing! But here is the Son of God being murdered, and that, too, in the most disgraceful and horrible form known to the world of his day, and yet as he hangs by the piercing nails his heart overflows with love and compassion for his murderous foes, and he prays, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

"Forgive," Jesus says. That is a great word. To do that is to do a great thing, a godlike thing. To forgive is to overlook and pass by an offense; to cease to think of it or cherish it; to restore the offender to the place he forfeited; to put him back where he was before; to forget the offense and treat it as though it had never been committed. Jesus asks his Father to do all this toward his murderers! And it means that he himself had already forgiven them!

But of course he does not expect his Father to do it unconditionally. They must be brought to see their own guilt, acknowledge it, repent of it and turn away from it. To forgive men before they do this is to confirm them in their evil course and encourage them to continue therein. Jesus' prayer, therefore, was not answered instantly, but was answered on the day of Pentecost, and thereafter. When, under Peter's scathing arraignment, "Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses," the people sought forgiveness through faith, repentance, confession and obedience, *then, and not until then, was it granted.* Every convert made in Jerusalem and throughout Judea of those concerned in the accusation, condemnation and crucifixion of Christ was an answer to Jesus' prayer, "Father, forgive them."

Our attitude to those who injure us

must be the same as that of Jesus to his murderers. Revenge and hatred must not rankle in the heart. Malice must have no place therein. We must have a forgiving spirit. We must be willing, ready, anxious to forgive. But we can not forgive fully until the offender repents. Nor is it right that we should. Every sin is a two-edged sword. It cuts two ways—into the heart of him who commits it, and into the heart of him against whom it is directed. Now, so far as it hurts you, you can afford to pass it by and forgive; but in so far as it hurts him who commits it, you can not until it has been healed by repentance. Otherwise you encourage, justify and approve of sin. The great end of every Christian when sinned against is to save his brother. That is the supreme thing now. How can you save him from the evil of his own heart? Certainly not by treating him the same as before, but by endeavoring as best you can to get him to see, acknowledge and repent his sin. That alone can save him. And

then alone can you fully forgive him.

The reason Jesus could utter this sublime and thrilling prayer of forgiveness was that the crime his murderers were committing was made pardonable by ignorance. *"For they know not what they do."* They did not know what an awful crime was staining their hands. When they afterward came to know, it appalled them and they cried out, "What shall we do?" But just now they had no adequate conception of their guilt. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." But when a man does not know, then his guilt is greatly palliated, *though not excused.* Ignorance *lessens* it. Jesus plainly teaches that Tyre and Sidon are to have consideration over Bethsaida and Chorazin, and Sodom over Capernaum, in the day of judgment, because they had less light and knowledge. Paul obtained mercy for persecuting the church because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. The heathen will be recipients of God's faithfulness and justice because they know

not the truth. God is not unjust. He will not hold men responsible for disobeying the law of which they never heard. The Judge of all the earth will do right. And he will consider the ignorance in our own land—the ignorance that results from the absence of advantage and opportunity, and from inborn and instilled vices, prejudices, prepossessions and all the influences which warp men's minds and prevent a clear apprehension of the truth.

But while ignorance palliates sin and makes it pardonable, it does not excuse or justify it. In spite of their ignorance, these people were guilty of sin and needed forgiveness. There is no point to Jesus' prayer if ignorance excuses sin. He asked his Father to forgive them because they were sinners, however great their ignorance. While Paul obtained mercy because of his ignorance, yet he calls himself "the chief of sinners." While "the servant that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with *few* stripes," *yet*

shall he be beaten with stripes. While it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Tyre than for the cities which enjoyed the light of Christ's presence, yet it will not be wholly tolerable for them. While Peter assured the murderers of Christ, "I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," yet he has them to understand that *"ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay."* There is no mistaking their guilt. None are so ignorant but they have some ideas of right. Even heathen nations have some light, and according as they treat the light they have, will God deal with them. The murderers of Christ knew not the enormity of their great sin, but they had *some consciousness* of it, however faint, enough to have stayed their hands. The reason, therefore, that ignorance does not fully excuse sin is *that it is never absolute.*

Our duty to religious ignorance is to spread the light. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." People will sometimes say, "If ignorance

makes sin pardonable, why enlighten the ignorant? Why send missionaries to the heathen, if they are not responsible?" For the same reason Jesus authorized his apostles to preach to his murderers! For the same reason we don't quit preaching here at home! If the argument proves anything, it proves that we should tear down every church, silence every preacher, burn every Bible and so relapse into heathenism! Ah! men are sinners in spite of their ignorance, and God wants them to see their sin, turn from it and live right lives. He wants them to know of his Son and be transformed into his likeness. He wants the knowledge of God to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. He wants men's hearts and their service.

The very sin these murderers committed is a sin of which every man who rejects Christ now is guilty. To reject Christ now is the greatest sin in the world. It is equivalent to the crime of those who two thousand years ago cried, "Crucify him." But, unlike those mur-

derers of Christ, men to-day know what they do. Twenty centuries have demonstrated his power to save. He stands as the only hope of men. If Jesus prayed for his murderers, how much more for those who have never owned him as Lord of lords and King of kings. He wants them to turn to him, and experience his salvation—full, free and everlasting.

XIV.

"IN HIS NAME"

XIV.

"In His Name."

Every duty, blessing and privilege of the gospel comes to us "in His name." How often the New Testament states this fact in regard to Christ's early followers! If they preached, they did it like Paul at Damascus, "boldly in the name of Jesus." If they wrought miracles, it was by following the instruction of the Master: "In my name shall they cast out demons." To the lame man who lay at the beautiful gate of the temple, Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." To the spirit of divination in the mind of the sooth-saying maid in Philippi, Paul said, "I charge thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her." If men were called to the duty of repentance and the blessings of the remission of sins, it was after the manner of Him who said "that repentance and remission of sins should

be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." If they were summoned to enjoy the privileges of justification, it was after the pattern of the Corinthians, who "were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of our God." If commanded to obey God in baptism, it was according to Acts 2: 38, or the Ephesians, of whom it is said, "They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

There was a time when the name of Christ was not thus used. To it Jesus refers when he says, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." Previous to the time when Jesus spoke these words no prayer was ever uttered "in his name." What we call the Lord's Prayer makes no mention of Christ. It ends, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen." Even that is an interpolation, and Luke

makes it end, "And bring us not into temptation." This fatal omission makes the Lord's Prayer to us an invalid prayer, unless the name of Christ is added to it in some way. "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me." A Christless prayer now is no prayer at all, and has no assurance of an answer. Parents teach their children:

> "Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
> If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take."

And it is a very beautiful *sentiment,* but it is not a prayer, unless it is closed by the phrase, "in his name." I care not where, or by whom offered—in the church or in the family, in the lodgeroom or the open field, in palace or hovel—a prayer that does not, either tacitly or expressly, plead the name of Christ, ascends not to heaven. This has been true ever since Jesus said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the

Father, he will give it you in my name."

It was in consequence of Christ's death on the cross that his name acquired such tremendous significance. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. *Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus* every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." So that Christ's name became the all-prevailing name *after,* and not *before,* his death. "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, *because of the suffering of death* crowned with glory and honor." "He, *when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever,* sat down on the right hand of God; henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet." In anticipation of that time He

said to his apostles, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." And the first time they stood up to preach, they said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, *that God hath made him both Lord and Christ,* this Jesus whom ye crucified." *His name* then began its power, for it marks the time when he took his seat on his mediatorial throne and was bequeathed the scepter. To this he refers in the striking words, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name." And his name shall continue thus to be used until his kingdom has become co-extensive with the world. "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." The reign of Christ on earth began on the day of Pentecost. And the significance and power of his name shall continue through all the centuries of the Christian dispensation in which we are now living, until

the time when the purposes of his reign have been accomplished and he hands over the kingdom to his Father. It is analogous with the mediatorial reign of Christ on earth, began when it began, and will end when it ends. And to ignore the name of Christ is to repudiate his mediatorship between God and man, to seek to pull the crown from his brow, the scepter from his hand, and to dethrone him as the rightful ruler and lawgiver, priest and prophet of the world.

The name of Christ carries with it the authority of Jesus. What is done "in his name" is done with his authority. To do anything "in his name" requires that it be done with his express and undoubted sanction.

His name makes our prayers effective. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full." He is the great lawyer

who never refuses a client and never loses a case. His intercession prevails in our behalf.

"By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child."

As a watchword, "In His name" is unexcelled. To embody it in our creed and to exhibit it in our practice is to be a Christian. No higher honor, no grander privilege, belongs to any of the souls of men than belongs to him who lives and moves and does all "in His name." There is no sublimer earthly destiny possible to man than falls to the lot of him who discharges aright the obligations which the name of Christ imposes, and lives in daily illustration of the distinguishing elements of the Christian character. Above all others can he indeed be truly said to *live*. *His* years, at least, do not fly past as the turning over of blank leaves. Every line of each glowing page is written full with messages that speak of the noblest meaning

and the truest purpose of life. Fulfilling the highest aim of existence and making the most of his talents and opportunities, he can truly say:

"Take the name of Jesus with you,
Child of sorrow and of woe;
It will joy and comfort give you,
Take it, then, where'er you go.

"Take the name of Jesus ever,
As a shield from every snare;
If temptations round you gather,
Breathe that holy name in prayer."

XV.

LET US PRAY

XV.

Let Us Pray.

We praise thee, O God, for the pure and lofty spiritual purpose of the Word of truth to guide and save the souls of men, to make known the world's Redeemer, to unfold the plan of salvation, to show men the way of escape from their sins, how to live righteous and holy lives here and attain to eternal life hereafter.

Help us, O Father, to square our daily conduct by it, to feed our hungry souls on its precious truth, to drink from its living fountains of waters, to allow it to dwell in us to cleanse us from all evil, to inspire and strengthen us for all that is good, to accept the glorious Saviour it presents, to obey the loving gospel which it brings, to enjoy the spiritual blessings which it provides, to form the holy character it enjoins, to live the blameless and useful life it urges, to try and reach at

last the heavenly home it promises and pictures.

And may we heed the urgent command and supreme necessity to speak it forth to all of every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue, until all shall know it and appropriate its blessings and privileges. In the name that is above every name, we ask it. Amen.

O God, I come to thee in full confession of my sins—my real, actual, specific sins. I confess them all. I make a clean breast of them. I have been untruthful. I told a wicked falsehood to this man, another to that. I have sworn profane oaths. I have been dishonest in trade. I cheated and overreached in several instances. I have slandered my neighbor. I allowed my temper, my pride, my selfishness to get the better of me and rule my spirit. I have been guilty of unclean thoughts and desires.

I want to turn from these things and turn toward thee with full purpose of heart. Thou hast promised forgiveness

and cleansing. I covet both. I need both. Grant me thy forgiveness to remove the *guilt* of sin, cleansing to take away its *love* and *practice* and *pollution*. Thou art faithful and just to do this—faithful to all thy promises and just in rendering to all their dues. And back of all is thy infinite love and mercy. Thou who forgivest iniquities and healest diseases, do this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thou, O Christ, art all we want and need. O thou Bread of life, of which we may eat and hunger no more; O thou great Physician, able to heal all our diseases and save unto the uttermost those who put their trust in thee; O thou great and good Shepherd, who assures us that he knows his own and will lead all to that eternal fold whence they shall go no more out forever; O thou light to illuminate the darkness; O thou true, lasting, tried, sympathetic, all-knowing and all-wise friend, who sticketh closer than any brother; O thou cleanser from sin and deliverer from its captivity; O

thou resurrection and the life; O thou mighty Advocate with God through whom blessings come to us from the chalice of God's grace—come to us in these varied and manifold ministries in which thou dost meet us in every possible exigency of life, or death, as the very friend we need.

In thy dear name, we ask it. Amen.

We come, dear Father, to voice the needs of those borne down by the toils and cares, the trials and sorrows, the sin and guilt of life.

We would remember at thy throne of mercy those who know the ache of limb, the weariness of brain and body incident to life's unending grind.

And we would have thee remember, gracious Father, the afflicted and crushed by life's heavy burdens and awful sorrows.

And, oh, the sin and guilt many are carrying! What a load is upon them! How it oppresses and drives to madness and despair! How it consumes the

strength and banishes the joy of life! Remember them in thy goodness and mercy.

Thou dost remember them. Thou hast said, through thy Son: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Rest unto their souls. Rest from anxious cares, from awful sorrows, from terrible guilt. Oh, help the careworn, sorrow-crushed, sin-laden to accept this precious invitation and find rest, rest forever, in Christ's name. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, we know how precious in thy sight thy church is. It cost the life-blood of thy Son. The toils and tears and cares of thy people in all the ages have been given to it freely and generously. It has come to us as a priceless inheritance. May we make and keep it "a glorious church, not having spot or

wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

We pray that it may be a church glorious in its doctrine, its holiness, its work, its unity and power, its conquests.

Especially, dear Father, do we pray for the primeval glory of the church's unity and power. May the day speedily come when there shall be one flock and one Shepherd. May the Captain of our salvation yet command an army that marches to battle in one mighty host and under one all-conquering banner.

And may the day be not far distant when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; when the heathen shall be Christ's inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession; when he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. May the church be the instrument of this glorious consummation. In every land and continent of earth and island of the sea may it unfurl the banner of the Cross. May the globe on which we dwell one

day be the trophy, through the church, of Christ's all-conquering power. In his name. Amen.

"We thank thee, O Father, for all that is bright—
The gleam of the day and the stars of the night,
The flow'rs of our youth and the fruits of our prime,
And blessings that march down the pathway of time.

"We thank thee, O Father, for song and for feast,
The harvest that glowed and the wealth that increased;
For never a blessing encompassed earth's child
But thou in thy mercy looked downward and smiled.

"We thank thee, O Father, for days yet to be,
For hopes that our future will call us to thee;
That all our eternity form, through thy love,
One Thanksgiving Day in the mansions above."

We thank thee, O Father, for the security of our homes, the freedom of our land, the facilities of Christian education, all the best attainments of the present and the grandest hopes of the future. In return for all thy benefits, we bring

to thee all the adoration of our hearts, all the strength of our noble purposes, all the influence of our lives, the full surrender of all our active powers, the complete ownership of all our possessions. Beautify, happify, magnify, glorify our lives in so doing, as thou hast promised. Control us completely. Make us more like Christ. Do it for his sake. Amen.

We are thankful, dear Father, for the trumpet-calls to service: "Go, work today in my vineyard;" "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" "To every man his work." We thank thee, O Father, for the purifying, sweetening, strengthening and happifying power of service.

We thank thee, gracious and loving Father, for the delightful fellowships of work. We have fellowship with thee and with one another. We are laborers together with thee.

And, oh, the assurance of victory! The might of thy omnipotence is pledged to it. Every foe shall go down before thee.

Every obstacle shall disappear. Every difficulty shall vanish like the mist. Around thy throne on high we shall wave the palm branches of eternal triumph.

May we, then, engage in well-doing, in continual well-doing, and engage in it confidently and hopefully. May we go forward in the path and work of life with renewed strength and usefulness. May we feed the hungry, clothe the destitute, minister to the unfortunate, entertain the stranger, make this land Immanuel's land, extend thy kingdom until it shall be coextensive with the globe, and make the desert places blossom like the garden of the Lord. Freely we have received, freely may we give. We ask it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Help us, our Father, to get into harmony with thy purpose concerning us. Thou dost seek our spiritual not material, our eternal not temporal, our highest and not lowest good. Help us to see in the events and experiences of our lives, be they sunshine or shadow, thy providence

making all things work together for our good.

May we trust thee implicitly, believe the precious promise, take thee at thy word. As the passengers on shipboard on a dark night in the trackless ocean trust the hand at the helm, so teach us to trust thy almighty hand that guides our lives.

And help us to hold fast to our love for thee. Thou art love. It dictates thy acts. Though our lot be a sad one, though it be all night and darkness, yet may we know that things do work for good to them that *love* thee.

We rejoice in the security this promise vouchsafes to us. The very angels encamp round about us as a defending wall of fire. Gibraltar itself is not so impregnable as are we encircled by thy omnipotent arm. As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, as a bubbling fountain in a sandy desert, as a guiding star through the rifted clouds, as a mighty anchor to the tossing ship on a stormy night, so may thy sweet promise be to

us in our time of need. In Christ's name, we ask it. Amen.

We come, dear Father, praying for decisions. We have presented the Christ and his claims. We have preached the gospel, which is thy power unto the salvation of every one who believes it. We ask now that men may believe and obey. Knowing the way of salvation, may they walk in it. Having been informed of their duty, give them grace and willingness to do it. Like Solomon, may they make a *wise* choice. Like Moses, may they choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Like Mary, may they choose the *good* part which shall not be taken away.

And may they choose now. Oh the *tremendous* now! Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation! Life is full of uncertainties, repentance put off is frequently repentance made impossible, there is so much to be done and so short a time in which to do it, all of which

things urge immediate action. Oh, may men act! Help them to act *now!* May they come pleading:

> "Nothing in my hand I bring;
> Simply to Thy cross I cling;
> Naked, come to Thee for dress;
> Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
> Foul, I to the fountain fly:
> Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

In Christ's name. Amen.

THE END.

GAIL B. DUNNING